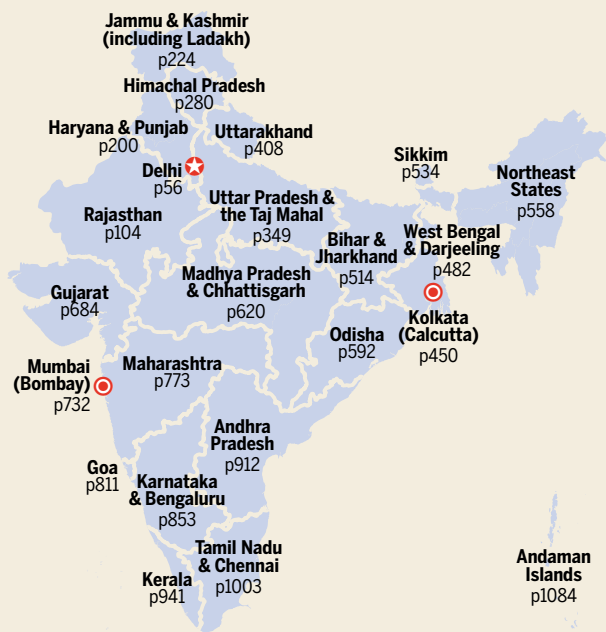




# India



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

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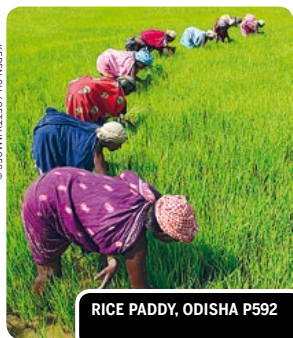
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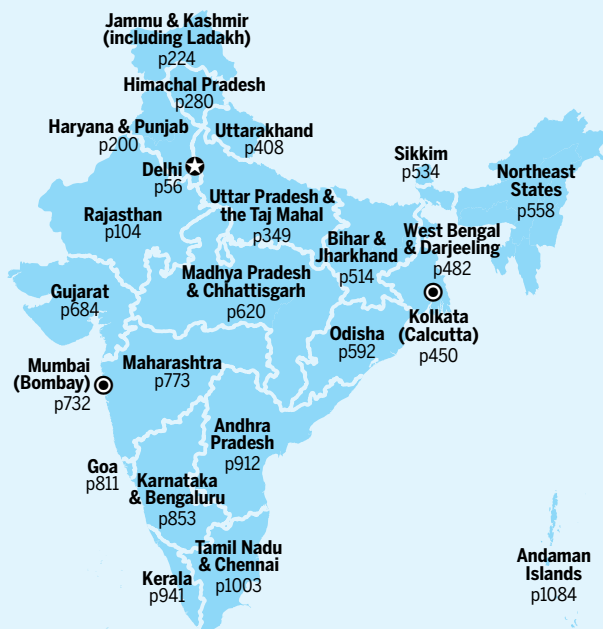
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# On the Road



# India

0 0 500 km  
0 0 250 miles

Dushanbe

TAJIKISTAN

AFGHANISTAN

Kabul

Amritsar

Sikhism's deeply revered Golden Temple (p212)

PAKISTAN

Jaisalmer

Formidable fort and desert camel safaris (p183)

Delhi

Architectural splendour and a 400-year-old bazaar (p56)

Agra

Home to the iconic Taj Mahal (p351)

Khajuraho

Sensuous sculptures wrap handsome temples (p633)

Varanasi

Intense spirituality by the Ganges River (p388)

Himachal Pradesh

Uttarakhand

Nepal

Kathmandu

Bihar

Patna

West Bengal

Dhaka

Agartala

Imphal

Kohima

Shillong

Guwahati

Itanagar

Thimphu

Gangtok

Darjeeling

Sikkim

Chandigarh

Punjab

Delhi

Haryana

Rajasthan

Jaisalmer

Barmer

Jaipur

Ajmer

Bikaner

Chittorgarh

Udaipur

Chittorgarh

Bundi

Kota

Shivpuri

Jhansi

Kanpur

Allahabad

Prayag

Varanasi

Bodhgaya

Shantiniketan

Patna

Muzaffarpur

Siliguri

Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary

Kaziranga National Park

Dibrugarh

Nagaland

Assam

Arunachal Pradesh

Lhasa

Gyantse

Thimphu Valley

Mt Everest (8848m)

Annapurna (8090m)

Nanda Devi (7816m)

Corbett Tiger Reserve

Hansi

Nainital

Dehra Dun

Shimla

Manali

Dharamsala

Pathankot

Amritsar

Atari

Kishtwar

Ladakh

Kargil

Leh

Padam

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Dharamsala

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Manali



**Ajanta Caves**

Ancient caves along a horseshoe-shaped cliff (p788)

**Hampi**

Ruins peppered amid enigmatic boulders (p896)

**Goan Beaches**

Golden sands nuzzle the Arabian Sea (p811)

**Keralan Backwaters**

Palm-fringed rivers, lakes and lagoons (p966)



### **Bradley Mayhew**

**Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal & Darjeeling (West Bengal Hills)** A self-professed mountain junkie, Bradley has been travelling to the Indian Himalaya for almost 20 years. For this edition he spent a month trekking across Zaskar, jeeped through Spiti and spent a week testing hikes around Kalimpong. Bradley is the coordinating author of Lonely Planet guides to *Tibet*, *Bhutan* and *Nepal* and

recently completed a five-part Arte TV documentary retracing the route of Marco Polo. See what he's up to at [www.bradleymayhew.blogspot.com](http://www.bradleymayhew.blogspot.com).

Read more about Bradley at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/nepalibrad](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/nepalibrad)



### **Daniel McCrohan**

**Rajasthan** Daniel has written 15 books for Lonely Planet, including six *India* titles, and this latest research trip was as incident-packed as any. He survived a sleeper-train bed collapsing on his shins, a man throwing up over him on a packed bus and a genuinely scary road chase, in which he was chased by crazy hotel tots before being saved by a guardian angel with a fast moped. When he's not risking his life in India, Daniel can usually be found in Beijing, or on Twitter (@danielmccrohan).



### **John Noble**

**Tamil Nadu & Chennai** John, from England, lives in Spain and has written about 20-odd countries for Lonely Planet. He first experienced Tamil Nadu in the 1980s when Chennai's Triplicane High Rd was clogged with bullock carts and families milked their buffaloes beside it. Autorickshaws have replaced bullock carts now, but the bustle of Tamil cities remains as exhilarating and exhausting as ever, and the thrill of reaching cool, green Kodaikanal will never pall. Best discovery of the

trip: the tranquillity of Tranquebar.

Read more about John at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/ewoodrover](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/ewoodrover)



### **Kevin Raub**

**Uttar Pradesh & the Taj Mahal, Odisha** Kevin grew up in Atlanta, USA, and started his career as a music journalist in New York, working for *Men's Journal* and *Rolling Stone* magazines. He ditched the rock 'n' roll lifestyle for travel writing and moved to Brazil. On his seventh trip to India, a cow threw sand at him and he was nearly attacked by a monkey – but he persevered. This is Kevin's 23rd Lonely Planet guide. Find him at [www.kevinraub.net](http://www.kevinraub.net).

Read more about Kevin at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/kraub](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/kraub)

**Lindsay Brown**

**Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra** Lindsay, a former conservation biologist and Publishing Manager at Lonely Planet, has been a frequent visitor to India for more than 25 years. Lindsay has trekked, jeeped, ridden and stumbled across many a mountain pass and contributed to Lonely Planet's *Bhutan, Nepal, South India, Rajasthan, Delhi & Agra* and *Pakistan & the Karakoram Highway* guides, among others. Lindsay also wrote the *Travel with Children, India's Wildlife*

& Parks and The Landscape chapters.

**Mark Elliott**

**Jammu & Kashmir (including Ladakh), Kolkata (Calcutta)** Mark has been making forays to the subcontinent since a 1984 adventure that lined his stomach for all eventualities. For this edition he was delighted to find Srinagar curfew-free and to see how well Ladakh had recovered from the flash floods that had caused such devastation during his last visit. When not writing guidebooks Mark is studying geopolitics in Sussex while rediscovering the England of his birth after living abroad for

more than 20 years.

**Paul Harding**

**Goa, Kerala** Paul has explored India and all its mayhem many times over the past 15 years, frequently writing about it. He still has a soft spot for the south, where the pace of life is that little bit slower. For this trip he investigated Kerala's backwaters at close range, was charged by wild elephants in Wayanad, and carefully inspected all of Goa's beautiful beaches while taste-testing fresh seafood. Tough life! This was Paul's seventh assignment on Lonely Planet *India*; he has also authored the Goa guidebook.

thored the Goa guidebook.

**Trent Holden & Kate Morgan**

**Karnataka & Bengaluru, Andaman Islands** Having worked together on books from Zimbabwe to Japan, Trent and Kate were thrilled to be assigned to India again for Lonely Planet, this time working as coauthors. In Karnataka they had the not-so-shabby task of testing Bengaluru's countless bars and classy restaurants, spotting leopards on safari and taking in Hampi's famous ruins. Trent also returned to the Andamans for more sun, surf and sand. Based in Melbourne, in between travels

they write about food and music.

**Amy Karafin**

**Mumbai (Bombay), Andhra Pradesh** Indian in several former lives. Amy first fell for the country in 1996, when she discovered *idlis* (spongy, round, fermented rice cakes), meditation and endless train rides. In many visits since, she has written about everything from Bollywood to *mithai* (Indian sweets), contemporary art to ancient religions, and yoga ghettoes to nizams' palaces; read more at [www.amykarafin.com](http://www.amykarafin.com). When not on the road, she can be found watching Guru Dutt

movies or singing filmi in Brooklyn, where she mostly lives. This is Amy's fifth time coauthoring *India*. Amy also wrote the *India's Top 17, If You Like, Month by Month, India Today, History, The Great Indian Bazaar* and *The Arts* chapters.

Read more about Amy at:

[lonelyplanet.com/members/amykarafin](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/amykarafin)

**Anirban Mahapatra**

**West Bengal & Darjeeling (South of Kolkata, North of Kolkata), Bihar & Jharkhand, Sikkim, Northeast States** Anirban threw away a career in newspaper journalism and hit the road as a travel writer in 2007, not long after realising that good food, great music and that awesome experience called life all existed outside the confines of a sanitised office cubicle. On this assignment, he retraced his oft-travelled routes through east and northeast India, meditating in Bodhgaya, befriending

rhinos in Kaziranga's grasslands, quaffing *chhang* (barley beer) with Sikkimese villagers, trundling through Arunachal's primordial forests, gorging on Nagaland's porky delights, grooving to the blues in Meghalaya and feasting his eyes on southern Bengal's gold-and-green rice fields. Anirban also wrote the *Scams, Directory A-Z* and *Transport* chapters. To know more about his escapades, log onto [www.anirbanmahapatra.in](http://www.anirbanmahapatra.in).



## OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

## OUR WRITERS



### Sarina Singh

**Coordinating Author** After finishing a business degree in Melbourne, Sarina travelled to India where she pursued a hotel corporate traineeship before working as a journalist. After five years she returned to Australia and completed postgraduate journalism qualifications before coauthoring Lonely Planet's first edition of *Rajasthan*. Apart from numerous Lonely Planet books, she has written for a raft of newspapers and magazines, and has been a high-profile travel columnist.

Sarina is also the author of two prestigious books – *Polo in India* and *India: Essential Encounters*. Her award-nominated documentary film premiered at the Melbourne International Film Festival before being screened internationally. Sarina wrote the Welcome to India, The Way of Life, Spiritual India, Delicious India, Sacred Architecture and Women & Solo Travellers chapters.



### Michael Benanav

**Uttarakhand, Gujarat** As a writer and photojournalist who covers issues affecting traditional cultures, Michael knew he hit the mother lode when he first visited Gujarat, criss-crossing the state on his way to remote tribal villages. In Uttarakhand, he's migrated with nomadic water buffalo herders into the Himalaya and joined religious worshippers on mountainous pilgrimage trails. The abundance of fascinating stories in these states – and the friendships he's formed in these

places – keep drawing him back. Michael also wrote the Trekking chapter.



### Joe Bindloss

**Delhi, Haryana & Punjab** Joe has been writing about India for more than a decade, covering everywhere from Delhi to the high Himalaya. He has written more than 40 guides for Lonely Planet, trotting the globe from Australia and Asia to Africa and Europe. If pushed, he would say his favourite spot in the world was somewhere in India, ideally with a clear mountain view. Between projects, Joe is based in London, with his growing collection of Indian instruments. Joe also

wrote the Need to Know, Itineraries, Booking Trains, Yoga, Spas & Spiritual Pursuits, Volunteering and Regions at a Glance chapters.

OVER MORE  
PAGE WRITERS

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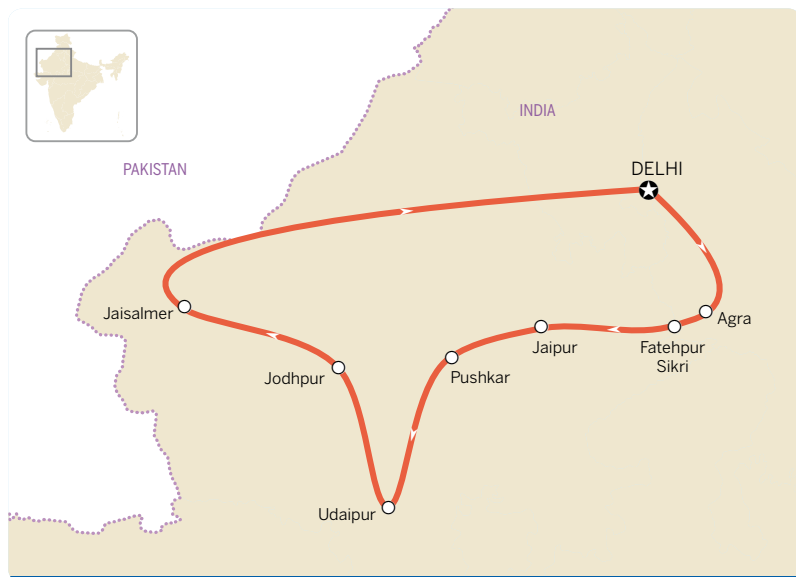
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# Itineraries



## Golden Triangle & Rajasthan

A tourist trail with genuine highlights to make up for the crowds, the Golden Triangle of Delhi, Agra and Jaipur combines some of India's top sights.

Kick off in **Delhi**, touring the must-sees – the Mughal-era Red Fort and Jama Masjid, and the magnificent Qutb Minar. Next, catch a train to **Agra** and gaze on the glory of the Taj Mahal, the world's most extravagant monument to love. Explore Agra Fort and devote a day to nearby **Fatehpur Sikri**, a mesmerising Mughal city. Continue on to **Jaipur**, and devote several days to the dusty bazaars and myriad monuments of the Pink City. Essential stops include the City Palace and Amber Fort.

Loop back to Delhi, or travel on to **Pushkar** for a few days of roaming around lake-side temples. Next, devote several days to graceful **Udaipur** and a lavish dinner at the hotel on the lake. Next visit Kumbhalgarh and the temple at Ranakpur, en route to **Jodhpur**. Soak up the colours of the Blue City from the battlements of magnificent Mehrangarh Fort. Spend the last few days in fortified **Jaisalmer** and indulge your *Arabian Nights* fantasies on a camel safari through the dunes. Finally, loop back to Delhi, with one last detour to the Qutb Minar, for a final dose of imperial splendour.





**6 MONTHS** **Grand Tour**

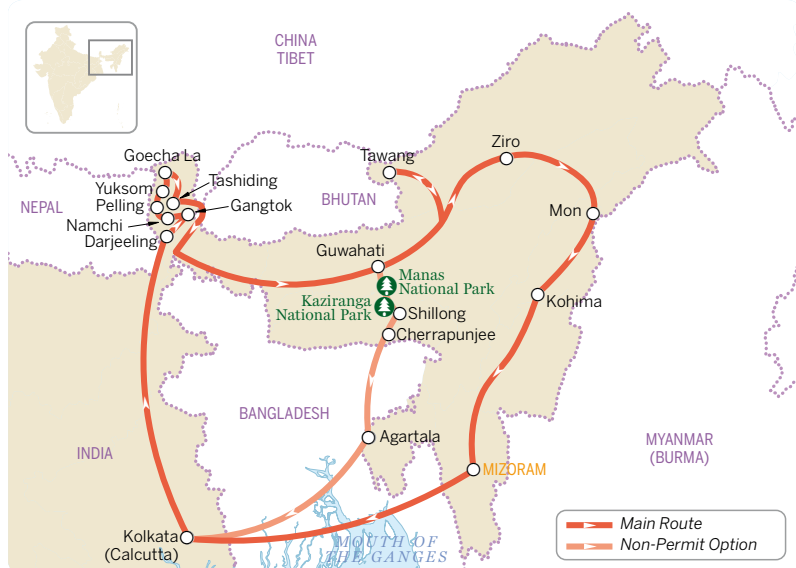
With six months on your tourist visa, you can fit in a lot of India. Kick off in **Delhi** and ride the rails north to **Amritsar**, to admire the gleaming Golden Temple. Connect through Chandigarh to **Shimla**, the Queen of the Hills. From this classic hill station you can roam northwest to Buddhist **Dharamsala**, home of the Dalai Lama, or **Manali**, starting point for the gruelling overland journey to rugged **Ladakh** (July to September), gateway to the high Himalaya. When you've had your fill of mountain air, head south for some yoga-training in **Rishikesh**, and descend to **Agra**, for a peek at the Taj Mahal. Amble south to **Khajuraho**, with its risqué temples, and scan the jungle for tigers in **Bandhavgarh National Park**. Continue to the holy city of **Varanasi** for a boat trip along the sacred Ganges.

Take time for detours as you wander east to **Kolkata** (Calcutta), bustling capital of West Bengal. Swing north as far as **Darjeeling** or **Sikkim** for sweeping Himalayan views, then drift down the coast to the temple towns of **Konark** and **Puri** in Odisha (Orissa). Consider a flight to transport you south to **Chennai** (Madras) for a dose of southern spice.

As you loop around the bottom of India, essential stops include **Mamallapuram** (Mahabalipuram), for temple carvings; **Puducherry** (Pondicherry), for colonial quaintness; and **Madurai**, for deity-encrusted temple towers. Allow a few days to kick back on **Kerala's beaches**, then swing inland to nostalgic **Mysore** to see how maharajas lived.

Continuing north, head to **Hampi**, where temples and ruined cities are strewn amongst the boulders, then get a second dose of beach life on the coast of **Goa**. Onward to **Mumbai** (Bombay), fast-paced capital of the West Coast; take in a Bollywood movie, then admire the glory of the cave paintings and carvings at **Ajanta** and **Ellora**.

To finish, heed the call of the desert in Rajasthan and complete the coloured-city triple – pink (**Jaipur**), blue (**Jodhpur**) and white (**Udaipur**). There might just be time to detour to the fascinating temples and nature reserves of **Gujarat**, before closing the circle with a last train ride to Delhi.



## Sikkim & the Northeast States

Surprisingly few people explore Sikkim and the Northeast States. Kept from prying eyes by insurgencies and permit restrictions, India's last frontier is slowly opening up to the outside world. From Kolkata, you can swing north to Darjeeling, get a full dose of Himalayan vistas in Sikkim then enter the fascinating world of India's hill tribes. Advance planning is essential – permits are mandatory and there are security risks to consider.

Starting in **Kolkata**, make your first stop **Darjeeling** – here you can sample India's finest teas and pick up a permit for Sikkim, one of India's most serene quarters. **Gangtok**, the Sikkimese capital, is the starting point for jeep rides to a string of historic, dramatic Buddhist temples. Veer to **Namchi** to see the giant statues of Shiva and Padmasambhava, and to **Pelling** for inspiring views of the white-peaked Khangchendzonga and the beautiful Pemayangtse Gumpa, ringed by gardens and monks' cottages. Take the week-long trek from **Yuksom** to **Goecha La**, a 4940m pass with incredible views, then exit Sikkim via **Tashiding**, with more wonderful views and another stunning gumpa, before travelling to Siliguri for the journey east.

In **Guwahati**, the Assamese capital, arrange tours and permits for the Northeast States: the remote areas of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur. If you can't get a permit, try this loop: from Guwahati, head to **Manas National Park** and **Kaziranga National Park** to spot rare wildlife. Detour to sleepy **Shillong**, and the waterfalls and incredible living root bridges of **Cherrapunjee**. From **Agartala**, capital of Tripura, return to Kolkata by air or overland through Bangladesh.

With the right permits, head from Guwahati to Arunachal Pradesh to pay your respects at the stunning Buddhist monastery at **Tawang**, or the tribal villages near **Ziro**, where the elders have dramatic facial tattoos and piercings. A Nagaland permit opens up fascinating tribal villages around **Mon**, rugged countryside dotted by traditional long-houses and remote settlements, and the capital **Kohima**, with its WWII relics. Manipur permits are rarely granted, but there's a fair chance of encountering Mizo culture in **Mizoram**, before you fly back to Kolkata.



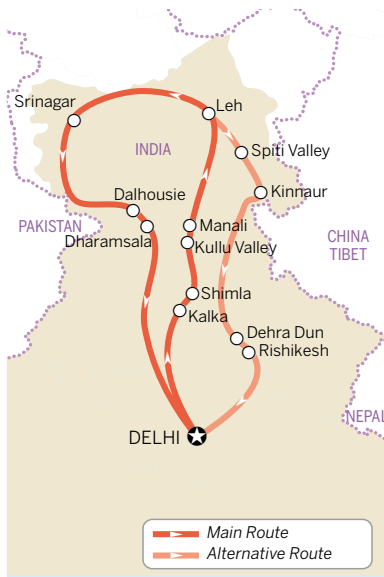
**3**  
WEEKS

## Central Temples

Visit some of India's most spiritual places on this temple-hopping trip around the central plains. Start in the chaotic but cultured city of **Kolkata**, then swap the big-city bustle for the peace of **Bodhgaya**, where the Buddha attained enlightenment. Roll across the plains to **Sarnath**, where the Buddha first taught the dharma.

Hinduism replaces Buddhism as you approach the sacred city of **Varanasi**. Meditate on the banks of the River Ganges, then ramble to **Khajuraho**, where Hindu temples drip with erotic carvings. Head southwest to **Sanchi**, where Emperor Ashoka first embraced Buddhism, then zip through Bhopal to Jalgaon, jumping-off point for the carving-filled **Ajanta caves**.

Next, detour into Rajasthan; stop off in whimsical **Udaipur**, with its lakes and palaces, then explore the extraordinary Jain temples of **Ranakpur** or **Mt Abu**. Continue to pilgrim-crammed **Pushkar**, then make a trip to nearby **Ajmer**, one of India's most holy Islamic sites. Take a final stop in atmospheric **Jaipur**, then end the trip in **Delhi**, with its magnificent Islamic ruins.



**4**  
WEEKS

## Northern Mountains

This mountainous loop takes in some of India's most spectacular views. Start by riding the rails from **Delhi** to **Kalka**, to board the narrow-gauge train to colonial-era **Shimla**. Spend a day or two rambling around the hills, then join the traveller pilgrimage north to the **Kullu Valley** for adventurous mountain activities.

From the hill resort of **Manali**, embark on the epic, two-day journey to **Leh** in Ladakh (July to September), to hike to dramatic Buddhist monasteries and trekking peaks. For a short loop, continue from Leh to Kargil and on to Kashmir (checking first that is safe to travel). Stay on a **Srinagar** houseboat, then loop through Jammu to elegant **Dalhousie**, and soak up Buddhist culture in nearby **Dharamsala**, before returning to Delhi.

With more time to spare, head southeast from Leh into the dramatic **Spiti Valley**, where ancient monasteries blend into the arid landscape. Ride the rattletrap bus to rugged **Kinnaur**, with its plunging landscapes, and make stops in **Dehra Dun** and **Rishikesh** to soak up some Hindu culture, before finishing in Delhi.

2  
WEEKS

## Southern Beaches

This trip gambols to some of India's finest beaches and charismatic coastal towns. Start at **Mumbai** and sample *bhelpuri* (crisp noodle salad) on the sand at Chowpatty Beach. Cruise to the stunning rock-cut temples on Elephanta Island, then travel south by train to beach-blessed Goa.

Enjoy the best of the sand at **Arambol**, **Vagator** and **Palolem**, then continue along the coast to the sacred town of **Gokarna**. Now change the pace entirely; head inland to **Hampi**, with its serene Vijayanagar ruins, and witness the zenith of medieval stone-carving in the Hoysala temples of **Belur** and **Halebid**. Return by train to **Mangalore** to sample spectacular seafood, then chug south to melting-pot **Kochi**, which draws influences from as far afield as China and the Middle East.

Cruise Kerala's languorous backwaters from **Alappuzha** (Alleppey), before dipping your toes in the warm waters around beach resorts **Varkala** or **Kovalam**. Make your last stop **Thiruvananthapuram** (Trivandrum), home to fascinating, often-overlooked museums, before closing the loop with the flight back to Mumbai.

3  
WEEKS

## The Southern Tip

Chennai (Madras) is the capital of the south, and the easiest starting point for exploring India's steamy southern tip. Time your trip to avoid the monsoon – the sunniest skies are from October to February. Kick off sampling incendiary thalis in **Chennai**, then surround yourself with intricate temple carvings in **Mamallapuram** (Mahabalipuram), one-time home of the Pallava kings. Next, head for the decadent grace of French-flavoured **Puducherry**, then leave the coast behind and head inland to the temple-towns of Tamil Nadu: essential stops include boulder-covered **Trichy** (Tiruchirappalli), and **Madurai**, with its soaring, deity-covered *gopurams* (temple towers). From here, it's easy to zip down to **Kanyakumari**, the southernmost point of India. Time to unwind: kick back on the coast at sand-dusted **Kovalam** and **Varkala**, then trade the sand for jungle fronds in steamy **Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary**, home to tigers and herds of wild elephants. En route back to Chennai visit colourful **Mysore**, with its outrageous maharaja's palace and giant stone Nandi (bull statue). Bingo – a neat circuit, stringing together the jewels of the south.

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